

---

---

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

---

---

Landmark/District: **Walter Reed Army Medical Center Historic District**      (x) Agenda  
Address: **6900 Georgia Avenue NW**

Meeting Date: **June 27, 2019**      (x) New construction  
Case Number: **19-386 and 19-387**      (x) Concept

---

---

The applicant, long-term lessee and developer TPWR Developer LLC (a joint venture of Hines-Urban Atlantic-Triden), seeks concept review to construct two six-story mixed-use buildings near the northeast corner of the campus. Each building would have a tall, commercial ground floor and apartments above.

The buildings were anticipated in the 2013 small-area plan for the campus, then depicted as mirror-image L-shaped plans bracketing a central green space. The 2015 master plan developed the idea of the greenspace and plaza more, and the flanking buildings were now wedge-shaped, as today, with a courtyard above the ground floor, but on the sides opposite the park. The Board reviewed a design for the park/plaza in May 2018, approving the concept but seeking further development of the kiosks, pergolas and seating, and seeking simplification of the paving and some interpretation of the property’s history.

The campus plans designated the north building as “Building O” and the south one as “Building P.” New construction in this part of the campus does not raise major preservation issues, because the buildings would be surrounded by new construction. For that reason, they did not elicit much comment from the Board at the schematic stage. The buildings are consistent with the small-area plan’s overall height limit for the “Town Center” area. That plan (at pages 85 and 86) calls for the buildings to step down from that maximum height toward Georgia Avenue. Building P steps down a floor—helping break up the larger mass—but Building O does not.

Both buildings would stand over the present underground garage; one ground-floor bay of each building’s side opposite the park would serve as a vehicular entrance.

The staff has recommended that the applicant bring to the hearing samples of the exterior materials, as they will be crucial to the success of the designs.

**Building O (North Building)**

Projecting balconies are not encouraged, as this type is not characteristic of the historic district. Yet, their effect is softened by landing on the projecting storefront or being within the recessed portion of the north wall. The corner balconies are probably the most successful, as they are incorporated within the body of the building. Yet, that condition raises another issue.

As is apparent in the perspectives, such as on Sheet A-19, the exterior masonry walls run the risk of looking false, because there is little depth and no return to them. They appear attached to the building's frame, and not at all structural nor constituting the bulk of the building. The stepping down of the masonry in the courtyards and around the ends of the building and the elimination of parapets at the ends heightens this impression. Especially with the number of metal balconies hanging off the building, it would be better to conceal the roof deck behind a parapet—consistent with the general approach in historic districts—rather than expose metal railings to view.

Contrasting patterned brick and some recesses within the walls adds needed texture. We would not recommend going too far with it, such as changing the pattern over the windows relative to that beside and below the windows, as seen in Sheet A-26. Recessing the secondary brick removes some depth of wall, raising the possibility that the window units will have little recess to their openings. Consideration should be given to not surrounding the south-facing windows with the secondary brick, but having brick panels above and below, as at the other openings.

There is a lot of fiber-cement panel on this building, a material more suited to the “attic” story than to the rest of the walls. It is more pardonable in the deep recess of the courtyard (A-23) than on the opposite side of the building (A-21).

The storefronts are quite tall, and especially on the Elder Street side, they could be lowered a bit by thickening the brick above.

### **Building P (South Building)**

Here, too, the masonry runs the risk of looking tacked on, but its regularity renders it an intentional frontispiece for each elevation. The whitish masonry appears to be a response to the front of building “IJ” west of 12<sup>th</sup> Street (which the Board reviewed in 2017), but it may look too white, rather than being in the buff family of limestone masonry found on the campus.

The southwest corner of the building—seen at right in the 12<sup>th</sup> Street elevation on page 19—is not very successful with its large cantilever in brick.

The pergola on the park side becomes too prominent with its outboard columns running down the face of the building (pages 25 and 26). The unusual projecting bay within the courtyard seems sufficiently compatible if its materials and coloration do not make it stand out too much.

While the commercial spaces themselves need to be high, some of the storefront heights seem too great, as at east end of the building. Some of the recessed space given over to sign bands could become masonry, and the glazing lowered. It is not entirely clear how the numerous canopies envisioned would be secured. It is hoped that the vents introduced to these sign bands will be kept to a minimum.

The main entrance canopy on Dahlia Street is not clearly depicted.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board approve the concepts as compatible with the character of the historic district but address any concerns, including those raised above.*